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NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1958

ITALY (short)

- I. Two recent issues have led to bitter church-state conflict in Italy.
- II. On 1 March court convicted Bishop of "criminal defamation of character" for denouncing as public sinners couple married in civil ceremony instead of Church.
 - A. Newspapers taking strong stand on one side or other.
 - B. Situation poses dilemma for Christian Democrats.
 1. Zoli said on 3 March he was "sorry as a Catholic, but thinks justice must take its course."
- III. An anti-Vatican article written by former French diplomat Peyrefitte, in 23 February pro-Communist Paese Sera. This drew a Vatican protest to Italian government.
 - A. Foreign Trade Minister Carli, the only independent in the Christian Democratic cabinet, reportedly offered his resignation--it was refused--after sending cordial letter to Peyrefitte, a personal friend.
 1. If Vatican presses the issue it may still do the Christian Democrats harm in elections.
- IV. Church-State relations likely to be explosive issue in elections to Chamber of Deputies to be held probably in May or June.
 - A. Church-State issue will hurt Christian Democrats.
 1. Probable Christian Democrats will not receive majority.
 2. Therefore, new government will probably be a continuation of present minority one-party government or a shaky coalition.
 - B. Monarchists will probably benefit most from Christian Democratic losses.

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garner some votes

NSC BRIEFING

5 March 1968

BACKGROUND PIECE ON ITALY

I. The trial of the Bishop.

- A. Bishop of Prato irritated by increasing number of civil marriages.
- B. Mario Bellandi, baptized Catholic but professed atheist married 12 August 1956, in civil ceremony only, Lexiana Nunziati, who had been a practicing Catholic.
 - 1. Bishop had warned bride to no avail.
- C. Bishop published pastoral letter read to faithful on 12 August 56 stating civil marriage not marriage but "beginning of scandalous concubinage," calling couple public sinners, and refusing Nunziati all sacraments.
- D. Bellandi whose health had been undermined as prisoner of war and who suffered paralytic stroke month after marriage, filed suit for defamation.
- E. Bishop, [redacted] refused to attend trial beginning Florence 23 February, on grounds civil court lacked jurisdiction.
- F. 1 March Bishop found guilty of defamation of character, given suspended fine of \$65 and ordered to pay trial costs.
- G. 4 March Bishop's lawyers appealed sentence. This is being interpreted as recognition of the court's jurisdiction.

II. Party strengths in present chamber:

<u>Party</u>	<u>Seats (total 590)</u>	<u>% Popular vote in '63</u>
Communists	142	22.7
Socialists	75	12.7
Democratic Socialists	19	4.5
Republicans	5	1.6
Christian Democrats	261	40.7
Radicals	1	—
Liberals	13	3.0
Nonaligned (new parties)	30	6.9
Neo-Fascists	25	5.9

There are 10 unaffiliated members